

turnout among Black voters to continue for more than half a century, until the Senate passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 over 70 years later.

A recent Washington Post analysis said that this current wave of voter suppression bills potentially amounts to “the most sweeping contraction of ballot access in the United States since the end of Reconstruction.”

Today, these attacks on our freedom to vote are taking us back to the time of Reconstruction.

We cannot wait another 70 years for this so-called deliberative body to act, which is why we need to pass comprehensive voter protection legislation. But not a single Republican supports the Freedom to Vote: John Lewis Act. Many of my Republican colleagues have joined Congressman John Lewis to commemorate the March from Selma to Montgomery, but today they won't even allow the Senate to consider legislation named in his honor and have called this bill radical. There is nothing radical about protecting a person's freedom to vote. What is radical is sending us back to the days of Reconstruction.

This legislation would restore and strengthen the Voting Rights Act, which Congress reauthorized with broad bipartisan support five times—1970, 1975, 1982, 1992—and it passed 98 to 0 in 2006, which included 10 currently sitting Senate Republicans.

This bill would also expand opportunities to vote, prevent voter suppression, and improve election security. We are talking about provisions that would require States to offer early voting and no-excuse vote-by-mail, make election day a public holiday, crack down on voter intimidation, and require postelection audits. Again, I ask, how is any of this radical? What is radical is justifying overt attacks on our democracy by perpetuating the Big Lie of mass voter fraud.

For Republicans, this fight isn't about election security; it is about securing their power, because Republicans have decided that spreading misinformation and rigging elections by preventing people from voting is the only way they will retain their power.

Republicans should come to the Senate floor and tell the American people why they won't protect our freedom to vote. Instead, the Republican leader came to the floor to attack Democrats for fighting to change Senate rules to pass this critical legislation, calling it a power grab.

The Republican leader said that Democrats want to “permanently damage this institution.” He went on to say the filibuster is “about compromise and moderation”—this from the Republican leader who refers to himself as the grim reaper as he prevents dozens of House-passed bills from being considered on the Senate floor; the same person who singlehandedly prevented President Obama from filling a vacancy on the Supreme Court

for over a year, denying the will of nearly 66 million Americans who voted to give President Obama a second term in office; the same person who pushed through President Trump's Supreme Court nominee as over 159 million Americans were in the process of voting. So much for compromise and moderation.

Let's not pretend this is about the sanctity of this institution. We cannot sit back and let one political party continue to unravel the threads of our democracy one voter suppression bill at a time. While Republicans do nothing to protect our freedom to vote in the face of mass voter suppression bills enacted across the country, we Democrats cannot sit back and let 2020 be the last free and fair election in our country.

If we don't protect the right to vote, we won't have a democracy. It is that simple. That is the reality. Since the Republicans will not lift a finger to protect voting rights, we have no option but to change the Senate rules in order to pass the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act. This is something that every single Democratic Senator needs to get on board with.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader is recognized.

FILIBUSTER

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, late last week, our Democratic colleagues briefly paused their quest to destroy the Senate's 60-vote threshold just long enough to use the 60-vote threshold themselves to block a bill.

Republicans supported sanctioning the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline that would give Russia even more leverage to bully Europe. Most of our Democratic colleagues bowed to the furious lobbying from the Biden administration to protect Putin's pipeline. There were 55 votes to pass the bill that our friends, like Ukrainian President Zelensky, desperately wanted passed, but Democrats blocked it by denying 60.

Now, many of these same colleagues have spent weeks thundering—literally thundering—that the Senate's 60-vote threshold is an offensive tool of obstruction, a Jim Crow relic, declaring that simple majorities should always get their way. Ah, but late last week, they literally wielded the 60-vote threshold themselves—a useful reminder of just how fake—fake—the hysteria has been.

We already knew Washington Democrats didn't have any principled opposition to Senate rules. Democrats repeatedly filibustered the CARES Act in March of 2020, while insisting on changes. Democrats filibustered and killed Senator TIM SCOTT's police reform bill.

You only have to go back a few years to read vigorous defenses of the filibuster from our Democratic colleagues and their allies.

The Democratic whip, Senator DURBIN, put it this way:

We need to protect the right of debate in the Senate, preserve checks and balances so that no one party can do whatever it wants. We need to preserve the voice of the minority in America.

DICK DURBIN.

The Democratic leader himself said in 2017 that we need to “find a way to build a firewall around the legislative filibuster”—build a firewall around the legislative filibuster.

Then, in a letter that same year by 32 Senate Democrats, our colleagues demanded—demanded—that the 60-vote threshold stay right where it was.

Until the last couple of years, Senators on both sides have understood the Senate is not here to rubberstamp massive changes by thin majorities. This institution exists to do exactly the opposite—to make sure major laws receive major buy-in and have major staying power, and, historically, Democratic allies outside this Chamber have recognized this as well.

Let's go back about 15 years ago when Republicans controlled the Senate. A leftwing organization called The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights published a lengthy statement defending—defending—the filibuster, including—listen to this—its relationship to civil rights.

Here is what they had to say when Republicans were in the majority here in the Senate:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition, with more than 180 member organizations, we urge you to oppose—

oppose—

any efforts to eliminate the 216-year-old filibuster in the United States Senate.

That is a coalition of 180 member organizations called The Civil and Human Rights Coalition.

They went on.

The elimination of the rights of the minority as embodied by the filibuster is contrary to the founding fathers' vision of the Senate as a body of equals designed to protect against the tyranny of the majority.

This statement continued.

The civil rights community has recognized and accepted the value—

The value—

of the filibuster even when it frustrated efforts to advance civil rights legislative goals. During the 1950's and 1960's, countless civil rights bills were filibustered. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was not passed until it survived 75 days of the longest filibuster in history and the Senate voted 71-29 to end debate and finally passed the bill. This legislation was enacted because of long, hard work